

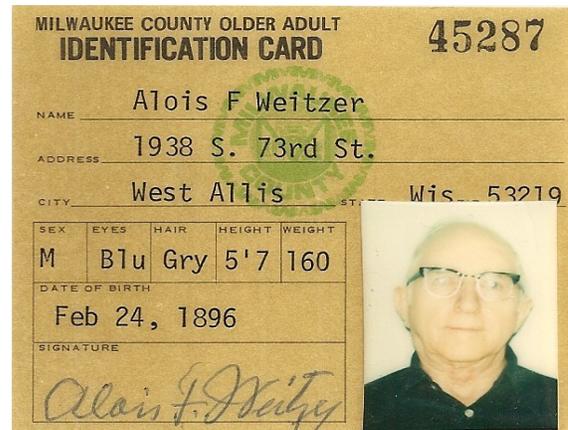
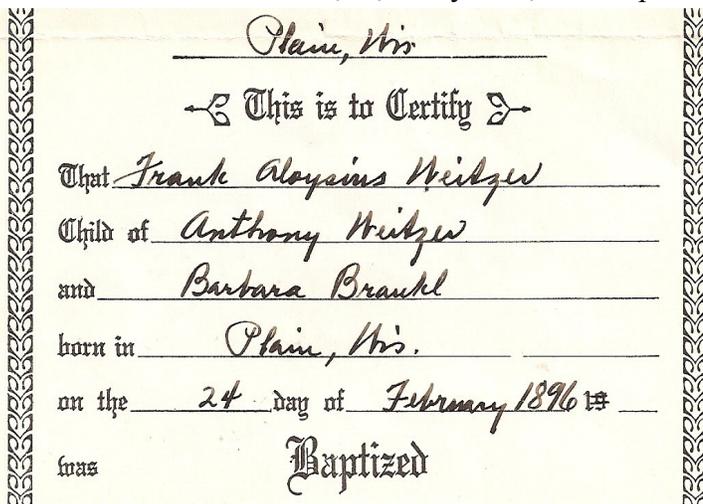
Ancestral newsletter # 22

Dear Readers,

Alois Weitzer, my grandfather, is the featured relative in this newsletter. But before we get started, I would like to address some spelling and pronunciation issues.

First of all, alert reader, Gorden Rieder, noticed that I spelled Rieder as Reider in both newsletter #19 and #21. Gordon Rieder is right, "Reider" is wrong. Sorry about that. I'll try to write it right from now on.

Secondly, my sister, Mary, brought to my attention that there could be several ways to pronounce Alois. Mom pronounced it as AL loys. However there is some confusion as to grandpa's real name. I don't have a birth certificate but on the copy of his Baptismal Certificate, his name is written as Frank Aloysius Weitzer. I believe Mom pronounced it Al oh WISH us. On his Communion certificate it's written, Weitzer, Aloysius and on his identification card, it is Alois F. Weitzer. Of course, everyone knew him as Al Weitzer; or, in my case, "Grandpa".



The Communion certificate (above) gives us a sense of how German the town of Plain was in the early years. It's hard to read but the event took place at St. Lukas kirche on June 20, 1909.

Also, for anyone unfamiliar, Weitzer is pronounced WHITE zer. Rieder is REED er. And, as I understand it, Hutter is not pronounced like Hut or Hoot. It's like the word "hood" except with a "t" sound instead of a "d". Finally, Liegl, also spelled Liegel, is pronounced like the word legal.

Okay. Now that I've cleared up any confusion on spelling and pronunciation, my next challenge is to explain, on one page, the complexities of the conditions which led up to the Great War (WWI). How hard could that be?

Aloysius Frank "Alois" "Al" Weitzer

Aloysius Frank Weitzer was born in Plain, WI on February 24, 1896. He was the son of Anton and Barbara (Brantl) Weitzer. His parents and eight siblings immigrated to America in 1893 from their home in Stockarn, Germany, and settled on a farm, south of Plain



Aloysius Weitzer



The Weitzer Family

The family was Catholic and they were members of St. Luke's Parish. Aloysius was baptized at St. Luke's. The first little stone church that Andrew Hutter helped build in 1861 (newsletters #12 & #13) was replaced by a larger church built in 1885 and that is where Al was baptized. By the time he received the sacrament of his First Holy Communion a third St. Luke's had been built to accommodate the growing congregation. It was built in 1903, the same year Al's mother died.



Second St. Luke's Church where Al was baptized



3rd St. Luke's where Al received First Communion

Mom and I took a trip to Plain back in 1995. We stopped at the George Weitzer farm and took a few pictures. Mom wasn't positive but she thought that her dad, Al, lived on George's farm for awhile. Al was eight years old when his older brother, George, built the barn in 1904.

Al made his First Holy Communion in 1909 at the age of thirteen. Besides going to school and helping on the family farm, Al may have had other chores to do. His brother George bought a hotel/saloon in 1909. Perhaps Al helped out. There were no child labor laws back then and family run businesses were common. Around 1910, Al came to West Allis, according to some info from Cletus Weitzer, son of Cecelia (Brechtl) and John Weitzer. Al got a job at Milwaukee Ice Machine Co. where his brother John worked as General Manager.



June (Weitzer) Klug in 1995
looking up at the G. Weitzer plaque



Deb Klug at the George Weitzer farm
(1995)

Alois Frank Weitzer
born February 24, 1896



The Great War

Life was good in America around the turn of the century and most Americans expected it to keep getting better. No one seemed to notice the underlying tension building up in the world.

European nations, competing with each other, struggled to stay in the game. This was the industrial age and falling behind was not an option. With limited natural resources, their very existence was at stake. For instance, France, still bitter that Germany had taken the rich, steel producing territories of Alsace and Lorraine after the war of 1870, wanted their land back. Britain is another example. British naval supremacy, and the British Empire itself, were being threatened by the speed at which Kaiser Wilhelm II was building up the German navy.

Many European countries developed “spheres of influence” by befriending smaller countries and then setting up naval and military bases there. They were also trying to expand geographically. In the early 1900's, Australia and South Africa became part of the British Empire. Germany added African territories to its domain. France had holdings in Indochina. Belgium and other Euro countries were also expanding. But the resources found in these areas were the true coveted prizes: oil, rubber, diamonds, gold and other metals. While colonization may have worked well for those European nations struggling for a balance of power, it didn't go over as well with the local populations who resented occupation by foreign rulers.

Some rebelled.

Austria had liberated Bosnia Herzegovina from the Turks. The Serbs wanted to reunite with Bosnia, which was once a Serbian territory but the Austrian Empire had no intention of allowing that to happen, so a small group of militant Serbian students decided to assassinate Austria's Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Sophia while they visited Sarajevo, Bosnia on June 8, 1914. One man, Gavrilo Princip pulled the trigger and inadvertently started The Great War (WWI).

The Austrian Empire declared war on the small country of Serbia.

As Serbia's ally, Russia mobilized her troops.

Germany sided with Austria and declared war on Russia.

France supported Russia through defense treaties so the Germans started marching to Paris.

To get to Paris they marched through Belgium. The incursion violated international law.

So Britain came to the aid of the Belgians and declared war on Germany.

America wanted no part of this overseas war, but with German submarines sinking neutral ships including the passenger ship *Lusitania*, the United States could no longer stay isolated and on April 6, 1917 the U.S. entered the war. By the end of the war, over 4 million Americans were in uniform, with about two million of them sent overseas. Alois “Al” Weitzer was one of them.

Al Weitzer's cousin, Alois Roth, who was born in Germany in 1890, had also been inducted into the army. The following paragraph is from *The Roth Family History*:

Alois (Roth) was drafted almost immediately, and was stationed at Fort Lewis, Washington, as a corporal who received pay of thirty six dollars a month. Although he was against fighting the war against Germany, it did not matter since the army would not take any German-born immigrants to Europe anyway.

Wisconsin had a large German-American population and most of them were opposed to going to war with Germany. Nine out of eleven Wisconsin congressmen had voted against a declaration of war but eventually 122,215 Wisconsin soldiers entered the service.

Al Weitzer was 22 years old when he signed up in July of 1918. He sailed to Europe on Sept. 9th. He may have been stationed in Le Mans, France and from there he sent a letter to his sister Barbara back in Plain, WI. In the letter he writes, “I am fine and hope the same of you” however, at some point he contracted spinal meningitis and was still sick when he came back to the states.

The war ended on the “eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month” (Nov. 11, 1918) when Germany signed an armistice treaty. While in France, Al had the opportunity to visit Paris and Lourdes. He received an honorable discharge from the Army on August 28, 1919.



Alois Weitzer

WWI

Honorable Discharge from The United States Army



5225-11
 SERVICE RECOGNITION BOARD
 INSPECTED
 BONUS PAYMENT ALLOWED
 \$130.00

TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

This is to Certify, That *Alois F. Weitzer*
 #375814 Private 83rd Service Co. I.C.C.

THE UNITED STATES ARMY, as a TESTIMONIAL OF HONEST AND FAITHFUL SERVICE, is hereby HONORABLY DISCHARGED from the military service of the UNITED STATES by reason of ^{CONVENIENCE OF THE GOVERNMENT, DEMOBILIZATION OF ORGANIZATION, PER CIRCULAR 106, W. D. 1918.}

Said *Alois F. Weitzer* was born in *Plain*, in the State of *Wisconsin*. When enlisted he was *22* years of age and by occupation a *Plumber*. He had *Blue* eyes, *Right* hair, *Right* complexion, and was *5* feet *6* inches in height.

Given under my hand at CAMP GRANT, ILLINOIS this *25th* day of *August*, one thousand nine hundred and NINETEEN

Frank W. Sherwood
 Major, Sig. Corps
 Commanding.

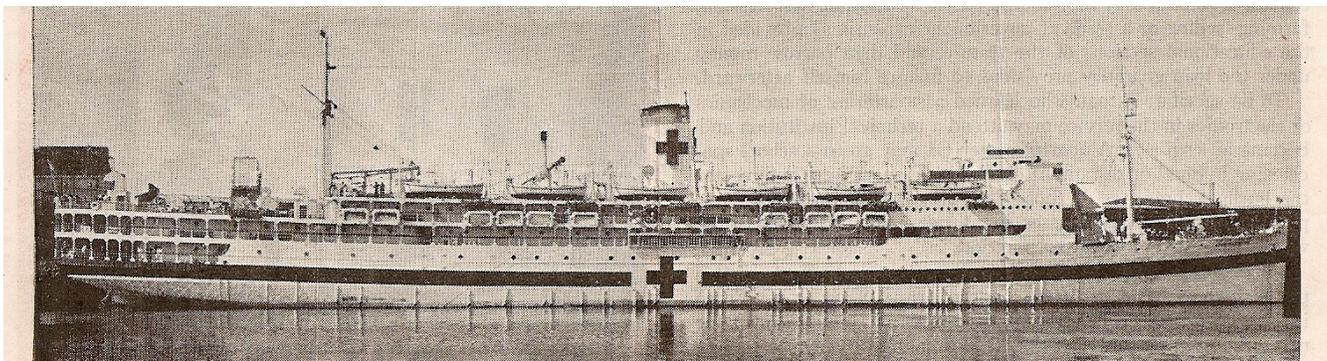
Form No. 525, A. G. O.
 Oct. 9-18.

*Insert name, Christian name first; e. g., "John Doe."
 †Insert Army serial number, grade, company and regiment or arm or corps or department; e. g., "1,020,302"; "Corporal, Company A, 1st Infantry"; "Sergeant, Quartermaster Corps"; "Sergeant, First Class, Medical Department."
 ‡ If discharged prior to expiration of service, give number, date, and source of order or full description of authority therefor.

C-3164

According to the discharge document, Al Weitzer was "entitled to travel pay to West Allis" and his occupation was listed as "plumber." His brother John was in West Allis and their brother Tony may have been living there too. In 1922, John, Al and Tony joined together to incorporate John's hardware store under the new name *Weitzer Bros. Plumbing and Hardware Store*.

Below: Alois Weitzer returned to America on the ship *The Siboney*.



Army Hospital Ship *Charles A. Stafford*. You knew it in World War One as the *Siboney*

This is the ship Al came back on in 1919.

A Voice from the Past

The YMCA, the Knights of Columbus and the Red Cross often handed out free stationery which was greatly appreciated by the soldiers who sometimes were unable to get writing paper any other way. The stationery used here by Al was from the YMCA while the envelope was issued by the Red Cross (see newsletter #21). The envelope also had a handwritten note "Censored by M.E. Kirney."

The K of C and the Red Cross also gave out free chocolates and cigarettes. The YMCA charged for items but had a larger selection. The letter below was written to Al's sister, Barbara in Plain, WI.

AMERICAN



ON ACTIVE SERVICE

WITH THE

AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

Feb 9 1919

Le Mans France

Dear Sister

I received your letter a few days ago and certainly was glad to hear from you.

I am fine and hope the same of you. I got a letter from Anton the other day and he says he is working in the store.

Well Barbara I am sending you a little Souvenir from France it is not much I hope you will like it let me know if you got it. With Best

Regards to you I am

Your loving Brother
Alois Wutzer